

## Examrace

# What is Psychology? Perspectives, Goals, Scope, and Areas for Competitive Exams

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- Beginning with the first psychological laboratory, founded in 1879 by German philosopher and physiologist Wilhelm Wundt, modern psychology's can be traced in many disciplines and countries.
- Psychology's historical perspectives and current activities lead us to define the field as the science of behavior and mental processes.

## Theoretical Perspectives of Psychology

- There are many disciplines that study human nature. Psychology is one. Within psychology, the biological, behavioral, psychoanalytic, cognitive and social- cultural perspectives are complementary.
- Each has its own purposes, questions, and limits; together they provide a fuller understanding of mind and behavior.

## Why Do We Study Psychology?

- Scientific inquiry begins with an attitude of eagerness to skeptically investigate competing ideas, with an open- minded approach.
- Putting ideas to the test helps us in fully understanding them.
- The curiosity that drives us to test ideas, and to expose their underlying assumptions, can be experienced in everyday life as critical thinking.

## Definition

- "Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes Human or Animal"
- Behavior is overt, manifest, obvious, and easy to study; the mental processes that help carryout these behaviors are covert, underlying, hidden, and not easy to study.
- Besides behavior, what causes these behaviors to occur and the mental processes involved in it is an important area of interest for a psychologist.
- Psychologists study animals' behavior too; to better understand and predict human behavior, the study of animal behavior becomes essential at times, especially because some researches cannot be carried out with humans due to safety reasons or ethical issues

## Goals of Psychology

Main and important goals of psychology, or in other words of understanding human behavior and mental processes, are;

- To understand the nature and mechanisms of behavior and mental processes
- To develop an understanding of the relationship between behavior and mental processes
- To apply this understanding to real life situations and, on the basis of this understanding, predict for the future
- To employ the scientific approach for developing this understanding
- In short, the main goals of psychology are:
  - Observation,
  - Description,
  - Understanding,
  - Explanation,
  - Prediction, and
  - Control of human behavior and mental processes.

### **Scientific Nature of Psychology**

- Psychology is a science
- It employs the scientific method for gathering knowledge and information. It uses scientific procedure that is essential to be adopted in order to carry out psychological research; otherwise the research will not be considered authentic, reliable, or scientifically valuable.
- “Scientific method is a systematic and organized series of steps that scientists adopt for exploring any phenomenon in order to obtain accurate and consistent results. These steps involve observation, description, control, and replication” .
- These are the main components of any science or scientific discipline. The methods of how to gather, process, and analyze information properly and accurately are very important in psychology as well.
- Remember! Science does not deal with the supernatural
- A number of people commonly believe, and they did more so in olden times, that the evil spirits, demons, or ghosts are the root cause of mental illness. Therefore, for them, psychology may be the approach that can free man of the supernatural possessions, which is a wrong belief.

- Psychology does not deal with the supernatural phenomena like any other science; it deals with only those behaviors that are overt can be experienced by our senses, that can be understood in psychological/scientific terms, and that can be dealt with through psychology interventions.

## **Scope of Psychology**

After doing a degree course in psychology one may join a variety of work settings, the most common being:

- Education/teaching
- Research
- Hospitals/clinics
- Recruiting/screening agencies
- Specialized professional settings e. g. armed forces, social welfare etc.

## **Popular Areas of Psychology**

### **Clinical Psychology**

- A branch of psychology concerned with the study, diagnosis, and treatment of abnormal behavior.
- It is the oldest as well as the most well-known branch of psychology. Clinical psychologists are trained to diagnose and treat problems ranging from the everyday crises of life such as grief due to the death of a loved one, to more extreme conditions, such as a loss of touch with reality.
- Some clinical psychologists also conduct research, investigating issues that range from identifying the early signs of psychological disturbance, and studying the relationship between how family members communicate with one another, to the understanding of a wide variety of psychological disorders.

### **Industrial/Organizational Psychology**

- A branch of psychology that studies the psychology in action at the workplace, including productivity, job satisfaction, and decision-making.

### **Health Psychology**

- The branch of psychology that explores the relationship of psychological factors and physical ailments or disease e. g. Health psychologists are interested in how the long-term stress (a psychological factor) can affect physical health.
- They are also concerned with identifying ways of promoting behaviors related to good health (such as exercise) or discouraging unhealthy behaviors (such as smoking, drinking etc) .

## Consumer Psychology

- A branch of psychology that studies and explains our buying habits and our effects of advertising a buying behavior. Mainly dealt with the likes and dislikes and preferences of people.

## Forensic Psychology

- The branch of psychology that investigates legal issues and psychological variables involved in criminal behavior; e. g. what factors determine criminal tendencies, how criminals be reformed, deciding what criteria indicate that a person is legally insane, and whether larger and smaller juries make fairer decisions.

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